Nouns as agreement targets in Romance

1. Introduction

1.1 Syntactic functions/contexts

- predicate:
  - i. John is a M.SG doctor(M)/a.F.SG doc.(F)
  - ii. Maria is a desaster(M)

1.2 Modifier:

- due popoli fratelli/sorelle

1.3 Non-issues

- pred:
  - Maria è un dottore/una dottoressa
  - Maria è un ottimo sindaco/un’ottima sindaca

- mod:
  - mi aspettavo un ruolo più chiave di Dwight Howard
  - alcune vitamine svolgono ruoli molto chiave nell’equilibrio ormonale

2. Nouns as agreement targets in Romance

2.1 Dressler and Doleschal (1990-91): “gender agreement via derivational morphology”.

2.2 a. Dressler and Doleschal (1990-91: 128): “Like many other Italian nouns (e.g. most of the derivations in -ista), derivations in -tore and -trice are simultaneously (with a few exceptions) adjectives and nouns to be distinguished only by syntactic means. When adjectives [...] they obligatorily agree in gender with their controller nouns by means of the derivational suffixes -tore and -trice.”

b. un’animar liberatrice/*liberatric/ dolce/sottile vs. un fatto *liberatrice/ liberatore/ dolce/sottile (a liberating/sweet/subtle soul F/Fac(M))

c. Bonami and Boyé (2005: 88): compare three conceivable analyses of the co-occurrence of le directeur, la directrice (N), (un schéma) directeur, (une idée) directrice (A) in French (derivation either way, separate lexemes)

- a. un gesto rivela-tore/*rivela-trice
- b. un a cos-a rivela-trice/*rivela-tore

2.3 RQs

- a. can nouns agree?
- b. if yes, under which conditions?
- c. what’s the role of morphology in such agreement rules (if at all occurring)?

2.4 Non-issues

- pred:
  - Maria è un dottore/una dottoressa
  - Maria è un ottimo sindaco/un’ottima sindaca

- mod:
  - mi aspettavo un ruolo più chiave di Dwight Howard
  - alcune vitamine svolgono ruoli molto chiave nell’equilibrio ormonale

2.5 a. Dressler and Doleschal (1990-91): “gender agreement via derivational morphology”.


“...”
(12) a. “An interesting argument for the separation of inflection from derivation is based on the fact that inflectional systems often display ‘portmanteau’ morphs. […] It seems to be the case that portmanteaux are much rarer in derivation (if indeed such elements exist at all). What is most relevant here, however, is the observation that there do not ever seem to be elements which combine inflectional and derivational categories in the same portmanteau.” (Anderson 1992: 75f.; cited in Ricca 2003: 189; 2005: 197)

b. Exercise in Haspelmath and Sims (2010: 113): “do you view inflection and derivation as dichotomous classes, or end-points along a continuum of traits?”

c. “Inflectional values may be expressed cumulatively; derivational meanings are not expressed cumulatively.” (Haspelmath and Sims 2010: 98)

(13) A scale for NP agreement (Dressler & Doleschal 1990-91: 126f.):
1. “predicative without article (including apposition), agreement obligatory”: (14)
2. “predicative with article, agreement obligatory with personal nouns, otherwise more or less acceptable depending on the acceptability of personification implied by the female derivate”: (15)
3. “generic, agreement possible, especially without article”: (16)

(14) a. Martelli che è stato promotore/promotrice del decreto
   “Martelli(M) who has been:M.SG promotor(M) of the decree”
   la Russo Jervolino che è stato promotore/promotrice del decreto
   “Mrs. (lit. the:F.SG) Russo Jervolino(F) who has been:F.SG promotor(F) of the decree”
   c. la SPD [= Social Democratic Party of Germany], finora spettatrice/spettatore
del/degli storici eventi, …
   “the:F.SG SPD(F), so far spectator(F)/spectator(F), of the historic events, …”

(15) a. insomma, la vera presentatrice/il vero presentatore è Gabriella
   “thus, the:F.SG true:F.SG presenter(F)/the:M.SG true:M.SG presenter(M) is
   Gabriella(f)”
   b. mi sento una attrice/un attore, alla quale batte il cuore a ogni inizio di film
   “I feel like an:F.SG actress(F)/an:M.SG actor(M), whose heart (lit. ‘to whom:F.SG the
   heart’) beats at every beginning of a film” (spoken by an actress).
   c. innanzitutto il vero vincitore/la vera vincitrice della guerra è stata la Germania
   “first of all, the:M.SG true:M.SG winner(M)/the:F.SG true:F.SG winner(F) of the war
   was Germany(F)”

(16) costretta al ruolo di spettatore/spettatrice, la SPD …
   “limited:F.SG to the role of spectator(M)/spectator(F), the:F.SG SPD(F) …”

(17) a. due popoli fratelli/*sorelle
   “two brother peoples(M)”
   b. due nazioni sorelle/*fratelli
   “two sister nations(F)”

(18) a. questo braccio è creatore/creatrice di immagini
   “this:M.SG arm(M)/SG is (a) creator(M):SG/creator(F):SG of images”
   b. queste braccia sono state vincitrici/vincitori
   “these:F.PL arms(F):PL have been:F.PL victorious” (lit. ‘winner(F):PL/winner(M):PL’)
   (Dressler and Doleschal 1990-91: 126f.)

b. Exercise in Haspelmath and Sims (2010: 113): “do you view inflection and derivation as dichotomous classes, or end-points along a continuum of traits?”

c. “Inflectional values may be expressed cumulatively; derivational meanings are not expressed cumulatively.” (Haspelmath and Sims 2010: 98)

(19) a. il braccio fratello/*sorella
   “the brother arm”
   b. delle braccia sorelle/*fratelli (cf. Morselli 1919: 134)
   “brother arms”

(20) a. un popol frate/*sorâ
   “a brother people”
   b. doua popoare surori/*fratâ
   “two sister peoples”

(21) a. l’avarizia è figlia/*figlio dell’egoismo
   “avarice(F):SG is (the) daughter(F):SG/son(M):SG of egoism”
   b. l’ozio è il padre/la madre dei vizi
   “idleness(M):SG is (the) father(M)/mother(F):SG of all vices”

(22) a. la vittima era un portatore/*una portatrice di pacemaker [male victim] It.
   b. la vittima era una portatrice/*un portatore di pacemaker [female victim]
   “the:F.SG victim(F):SG was a pacemaker carrier(F):SG/carrier(M):SG”

(23) “syntactic predicate noun agreement is the rarest type of predicate agreement, though not absolutely excluded by general linguistic theory” (Comrie 1975: 411)

(24) Agreement and Predicate Hierarchy (Corbett 2006: 233):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>attribute</th>
<th>predicate</th>
<th>participles</th>
<th>adjectives</th>
<th>nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adjunct</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(25) a. bambo ndi a-phunzitsi Chichewa
   father(CL.1) is CL2 teacher (Corbett and Mtenje 1987: 10 n.3)
   “father is a teacher” (identifies with father and is polite)
   b. bambo ndi m-phunzitsi
   father(CL.1) is CL1 teacher
   “father is a teacher” (a bald statement of fact)
   c. a-bambo!
   polite address to (SG) father; literally plural
   CL2 father

(26) a. a vendêg-ek tanár-ôk volr-ak Hungarian
   DEF guest-PL teacher-PL be.PST-PL
   ‘the guests were teachers’
b. három vendég tanár volt
three guest[SG] teacher[SG] be.PST[SG]
‘three guests were teachers’

c. *három vendég-ek tanár-ok volt-ak
three guest-PL teacher-PL be.PST-PL
intended: ‘three guests were teachers’

(27) objections (by one anonymous reviewer):

a. “When talking about agreement targets, typically what we mean is that we have to select an appropriate word form from the paradigm of a single lexeme, which offers contrasting forms in terms of morphosyntactic features, like person, gender and number.”

b. s/he concedes that e.g. creatore/*creatrice (18), but not e.g. fratello/*sorella (19) may be considered as instances of agreement: “In the case of figlia and fratella – it seems to me – we select from a pair of related lexemes (figlio/figlia and fratello/sorella), which are semantically compatible in the predicate context in question.”

(28) en lit-en bil (Norwegian, Bokmål; Corbett 2006: 15)

one/a small-M.SG car(M)[SG] Criterion 7 (for Canonical Agreement):
to smá bil-er regular > suppletive [target inflection]
two small.PL car(M)-PL (> = ‘more canonical than’)
‘one small car/two small cars’

(28’) Bonami & Boyé (2019:188-9): “The idea is that all French nouns and adjectives share the same basic bidimensional paradigm structure distinguishing two genders and two numbers; lexeme formation processes that output nouns or adjectives need to provide strategies to fill that enlarged paradigm, i.e. to generate paired masculine and feminine forms. The difference between gender-iconic pairs [e.g. directeur/directrice, M.L.] and other nouns [e.g. frère/sœur, M.L.] would then stand at the interface between form and content paradigms [cf. Stump (2006), M.L.]: by virtue of being specified for gender lexically, non-gender-iconic pairs have a content paradigm that is smaller than their form paradigm by using only forms corresponding to one gender.”

3. Noun-to-adjective conversion in Asturian

(29) The dictionaries (e.g. DGIA, DALLA) list separate entries (N/A) with the same root:

a. fiu ‘son’/fi’a ‘daughter’; hermanu ‘brother’/hermana ‘sister’; gochui-a ‘pig’; llobu ‘wolf’/lloha ‘she-wolf’; perru ‘dog’/pera ‘she-dog’; raposa ‘(he-)fox’/raposa ‘(she-)fox’;

b. fiu, -a, -o ‘consequent, ensuing’; hermanu, -a, -o ‘alike, identical’; gochui, -a, -o ‘dirty’, ‘bad-mannered’; llobu, -a, -o ‘wolfy’, ‘bad, harsh, cynical’; perru, -a, -o ‘bad’, ‘disobedient’; raposa, -a, -o ‘cautious, non-talkative’.

(30) a. es-o ye fi-o de l-o anterior
this.NONPROX-N is ensuing-N of DEF-N preceding
‘this follows from what happened before’

b. es-a ye herman-o d’aquell-o otr-o
this.NONPROX-F cloth(f) is similar-N of that-N other-N
(A.LIA. 2001: 325, under “Axetivos calificativos”)

(31) a. MASCULINE (COUNT) b. FEMININE (COUNT) c. NEUTER adjective inflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>herman-u</td>
<td>herman-a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘identical’</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(32) a. llamá-te ’l to herman-u pequeño-a
call:PRET.3SG=ACC.2SG DEF[M.SG] POSS.2SG brother(M,MC)-SG
‘your little brother called you’ (A.LIA. 2001: 328)

b. est-i coberter ye herman-u
this.PROX-M.SG blanket(M,MC)[SG] is brother-M.SG

d’ es-i otr-u of DEM.NONPROX-M.SG other-M.SG
‘this blanket is similar to that other’

(33) Central Asturian (dialect of Lena; Neira Martinez 1955: 70–72):

gender countability det N Adj

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. F count</th>
<th>la casa fri-o</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘DEF.F.SG cold-FG.C.SG house(F,FC)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. mass</td>
<td>tishe fri-o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘DEF.F.SG cold-FG.N milk(F,FN)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. M</td>
<td>el café fri-o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘DEF.M.SG cold-FG.N coffee(M,N)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. count</td>
<td>pie fri-o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘DEF.M.SG cold-MG.C.SG foot(M,MC)’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(34) a. et nea-ã ta cansá-ã
‘the child is tired’

b. l-a to sobrin-a no ta casad-a
DEF-F.SG POSS.2SG niece(f,FC)-SG NEG stay.PRS.3SG married-FG
‘your niece is not married’

c. l agu-a ta fori-o
DEF water(F,N)-SG stay.PRS.3SG boiled-N
‘the water is boiled’

(35) a. güei ta tapecî-o
today be.PRS.3SG dark-N
‘it’s dark today’

b. est-o ye rie-ó
this-N be.PRS.3SG delicious-N
‘this is delicious’
(36) a. aquel perr-u, vendió-l-u
    'that dog, s/he sold it-m' (A.Ll.A. 2001: 20)
  b. el fl-u, tuy-u
    DEF[M.SG] son(M,MC)-SG POSS.2SG-MC.SG
    'your son' (A.Ll.A. 2001: 66)
  c. llámó-te 'l to herman-u pequeñ-u
    call:PRX=3SG=DO.2SG DEF[M.SG] POSS.2SG brother(M,MC)-SG little-MC.SG
    'your little brother called you' (A.Ll.A. 2001: 328)
  d. el llob-u ye carnivör-u
    DEF[M.SG] wolf(M,MC)-SG be:PRS.3SG carnivorous-MC.SG
    'wolves are carnivorous' (lit. 'the wolf is')

(37) The only three doublets (M and N) in standard Asturian (A.Ll.A. 2001: 93, 323)
  a. fier-o ‘iron’
     b. fierr-u ‘iron implement’
     c. otherwise same inflection
     pel-o ‘hair’ mass
     pel-u ‘hair’ count
     vin-u ‘wine(M,N)’ =
     fil-o ‘thread’ mass
     fil-u ‘thread’ count
     neñ-u ‘child(M,MC)’

(38) a. Xuan y Pedro son herman-os / *herman-es de María
    John(M) and Peter(M) are brother(M)-PL / sister(F)-PL of Mary(F)
    John(M) and Peter(M) are identical-M.PL / identical-F.PL to Mary(F)
    'John and Peter are Mary’s brothers' or 'John and Peter are identical to Mary'
  b. Xuan y Pedro son=lo
    John(M) and Peter(M) are=such
    '(Mary’s brothers/identical to Mary) John and Peter are'

(39) a. l’ italiano-u y el francés
    son dos puebl-os herman-os / *herman-es
    are two people(M,MC)-PL brother(M)-PL / sister(F)-PL
    'the Italian and French ones are two brother peoples'
  b. l-a italiano-a y l-a francés-a
    DEF-F.SG Italian-F.SG and DEF-F.SG French-F.SG
    son dos nacion-es herman-es / *herman-os
    are two nation(F,FC)-PL sister(F)-PL / brother(M)-PL
    'the Italian and French ones are two sister nations'

(40) a. No que tien que ver col entusiasmu pola Unión Europea, l’italianu y el francés
    son dos puebl-os herman-os / *herman-es
    are two people(M,MC)-PL alike-M.PL / alike-F.PL
    'as for the enthusiasm towards the European Union, the Italian and French peoples
    are alike'
  b. No que tien que ver col entusiasmu pola Unión Europea, la italiana y la francesa
    son dos nacion-es herman-es / *herman-os
    are two nation(F,FC)-PL alike-F.PL / alike-M.PL
    'as for the enthusiasm towards the European Union, the Italian and French nations
    are alike'

(41) a. est-i cobertor y l-as sában-os
    this.PROX=M.SG blanket(M,MC)[SG] and DEF-M.PL blanket(M,MC)-PL
    son herman-os d’es-os
    are identical-M.PL of DEM:NONPROX=M.PL other-M.PL
    'this blanket and the bed sheets are identical to those others'
  b. du-me tel-es herman-es d’aquell-es
    give=DAT.1SG cloth(F,FC)-PL identical-F.PL of DEM:DIST=F-PL
    'give me clothes identical to those'

(42) o-agreement on manner adverbs with a nominal root in Asturian (D’Andrés 1993: 72,
  a. ta perr-o, pero hai que tirar p’alantre
     is dog-N but there be PRS.3SG that pull:INF forward
     'it’s bad, but one must go on'
  b. contestó-y mui llob-o
     answer:PRS.3SG=IO3SG very harshly (= wolf-N)
     's/he answered to him/her very harshly/cynically'

    "Nesti grupu inclúinse, amás de los axetivos calificativos, los participios y los
    sustantivos axetivos"}

(44) l-o stomaco […] mugugnava lup-esca-mente
    DEF-M.SG stomach(M,MC) grumble:IMPF.3SG wolf-N→A-A→Adv
    'the stomach was grumbling wolfishly’ (Silva 2014)

    "Tamién son alverbios de mou munchos que se formen cola
    inmovilización morfológica: abarayoa, alto, bajo, curioso, diferente, distinto, escayapa, estremoa,
    formal, igual, malcurioso, regular, volao, etc. En xeneral, tolos alverbios
    formao con-mente son de mou: abarayadoamente, afogadamente, bonablemente, fondamente,
    guadamente, intelixentemente, llocamente, neciamente, rápidamente, talamente, etc.

4. Agreeing nouns in the dialect of Ripantasone

(46) a. Maria sente fredd-o / *fredd-a
    Mary(F) feels cold(M,MC)-SG / cold-F.SG
    'Mary feels cold'
b. il freddo, Maria l-o sente
DEF.M.SG cold(M)-SG Mary(F) 3-M.SG feels
‘(the cold/chill) Mary feels it’

c. i freddi di quest’inverno, Maria l-i ha sofferto molto
DEF.M.PL cold(M)-PL of this winter Mary(F) 3-M.PL has suffered much
‘the cold weather this winter, Maria has suffered a lot’

(47) a. l-a cas-a sembra fredd-a / *fredd-a It.
DEF.F.SG house(F)-SG seems cold-F.SG cold(M)-SG
‘the house seems cold’

b. fredda, la cas-a l-o / *l-a sembra
cold-F.SG, DEF.F.SG house(F)-SG 3-M.SG / 3-F.SG seems
‘(cold) the house seems so’

(48) a. i /send-u fredd-u / *fredd-u
‘I’m cold’ ‘the salt’ ‘the son’ ‘the girl’

b. i /send-e fredd-e / *fredd-e
ISG.NOM feel.PRS[1]F.SG cold(N)-F.SG
‘I’m cold’ ‘I’m cold’ (female referent)

(49) l-a fredd-a l-a/*u/*e / *send-e / *pure l(a) Ripano
DEF-N cold(N)-non.F.SG DO-N-/M.SG/F.SG feel.PRS[1]N also ISG.NOM
‘the cold, I feel it too’

(50) a. NEUTER b. MASCULINE c. FEMININE Ripano

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PRS</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la ‘sal-a’</td>
<td>fu ‘lli-a’</td>
<td>le frò‘kín-e</td>
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</tbody>
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weak noun inflection

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PL</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘the salt’</td>
<td>‘the son’</td>
<td>‘the girl’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(51) a. NEUTER b. MASCULINE c. FEMININE Agreement on nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PRS</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>l-s ‘fredd-a’</td>
<td>‘fredd-e’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

(exemplified with)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘fredd-i’</td>
<td>‘fredd-a’</td>
<td></td>
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(52) a. NEUTER b. MASCULINE c. FEMININE Ripano

<table>
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<th>PRS</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘sal-a’</td>
<td>‘lli-i’</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

strong noun inflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘son’</td>
<td>‘girl’</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

(53) a. NEUTER b. MASCULINE c. FEMININE Agreement on adjectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PRS</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘brut-a’</td>
<td>‘brut-e’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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(exemplified with)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL</th>
<th>MASCIND</th>
<th>FEMIND</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘brut-i’</td>
<td>‘brut-a’</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

‘brutat’ ‘ugly’ (strong infl.)

(54) a. n ‘zem-a t’ a ‘lâm-um’ / ‘lent-um’ / ‘hâzri-um
INDEF man(M)-SG has hunger(F)-M.SG / thirst(F)-M.SG / haste(F)-M.SG
‘a man is hungry/thirsty/in a hurry’

b. n-e ‘zem-e t’ a ‘lâm-um’ / ‘lent-e’ / ‘hâzri-e
INDEF-F.SG woman(F)-SG has hunger(F)-F.SG / thirst(F)-F.SG / haste(F)-F.SG
‘a woman is hungry/thirsty/in a hurry’

(55) a. ‘so ‘lir-u in dger’manj-u dialect of San Rustico
be.PRS.1SG gone-M.SG to Germany(F)-M.SG (outlying part of
‘I went to Germany’ (male referent)
Ripatransone)

b. ‘so ‘lir-a in dger’manj-a N.B.: -a F.SG
be.PRS.1SG gone-F.SG to Germany(F)-F.SG
‘I went to Germany’ (female referent)

5. Conclusion

(56) a. nouns serving as agreement targets, “the rarest type of predicate agreement”
(Comrie 1975: 411).

b. this may happen via cumulation of derivation and inflection, but not necessarily.

c. most frequent case: personal nouns, occurring in the non-protopypical syntactic functions as modifiers or predicates, agree in gender and number with the controller noun which is either the head of the relevant NP (modification) or the head of the subject NP in an intransitive clause (predication).

d. Asturian: the words containing the roots for ‘brother’, ‘sister’ etc. show agreement, either like elsewhere in Romance (56c) or as the product of conversion into adjectives.

e. Ripano: agreement without conversion, whereby a noun agrees with a controller without being a (final) predicate, a situation which is extremely rare cross-
linguistically.

f. non-protopotypical uses of nouns: Romance offers much more challenging evidence than that from “mainstream” standard Romance languages such as French or Italian usually quoted in typological surveys such as Nikolaeva and Spencer (2019).

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